

Trafficking in Persons Report for Greece
Released June 2006
GREECE (TIER 2)

Greece is a destination and, to a lesser extent, transit country for women and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor. Some men are trafficked for forced labor. Most victims are trafficked from Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Africa, especially Nigeria. Although NGOs reported a decrease in the number of Albanian children trafficked to Greece in 2005, there were reports that Albanian Roma children continued to be trafficked for forced begging and stealing.

The Government of Greece does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. The Government of Greece increased its capacity to protect and assist victims in 2005. It improved cooperation with NGOs with the completion of a Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) to allow Greek authorities to work more directly with NGOs. After several years of negotiations, the Government signed a child repatriation agreement with Albania. In 2006, it implemented a national public awareness campaign that targeted victims, clients, and the Greek public. The Government of Greece should now provide available protections to trafficking victims and ensure that NGOs have an operational role in victim identification. While the government increased convictions of trafficking crimes in 2005, most traffickers were released awaiting appeal, including traffickers already sentenced. The Government of Greece should demonstrate the political will to punish traffickers sufficiently over the next year. Trafficking-related complicity by government officials should be vigorously prosecuted.

Prosecution

The Government of Greece continued to investigate cases of trafficking and secured convictions for increased numbers of traffickers in 2005. In January 2006, the Government established 12 additional anti-trafficking task forces throughout the country and funded specialized training for over one thousand police officers throughout Greece. In 2005, the Greek Government investigated 60 trafficking cases and arrested 202 suspected traffickers. The number of trafficking convictions increased to nine, and sentences for these convicted traffickers ranged from one to 12 years. The government could not, however, confirm whether any traffickers were actually serving the time sentenced. While the government reported that over 100 defendants were awaiting prosecution on 2005 trafficking charges, Greek courts released the majority of defendants. The Greek Government

demonstrated leadership in promoting regional law enforcement cooperation during the reporting period. The government has not responded adequately to allegations that some Greek diplomats abroad facilitated trafficking by issuing visas with little documentary evidence and no personal interviews to women subsequently identified as trafficking victims. There were numerous reports of trafficking complicity among local police. Three police officers -- two of them senior -- currently face charges relating to trafficking complicity.

Protection

The Government of Greece took modest steps to improve protection for victims of trafficking over the last year; however, many aspects of the government's protection framework remained unimplemented. In November 2005, the government signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with 12 NGOs and IOM to improve government-NGO coordination in a screening and referral process for trafficking victims; police had referred 19 victims to NGO shelters by March 1, 2006. Some anti-trafficking NGOs chose not to sign the Memorandum and others were not invited to sign it. The screening and referral process does not yet adequately identify and protect most potential victims in the country. In February 2006, the government concluded a long-awaited protocol with Albania on the repatriation of Albanian child trafficking victims. The government granted 22 new and seven renewed residence permits for trafficking victims in 2005. In 2005, the government identified 137 trafficking victims, 57 of whom accepted assistance and protection. Greek law does not yet exclude trafficking victims from punishment for unlawful acts that are a result of their trafficking. Nevertheless, the government reported that Greek prosecutors exercised their power to waive prosecution of all 137 victims. NGOs reported cases in which the government failed to protect victims' identities. In 2005, the Greek parliament passed a law that provides for a one month "reflection period" for suspected victims and central issuance and renewal of residence permits. Although the majority of identified trafficking victims possess legal visas, potential trafficking victims without legal status continued to be at risk of deportation.

Prevention

In 2005, the Greek Government continued to provide significant funding to NGOs and international organizations that provide programs, shelters, and legal aid to victims of trafficking. In 2006, the Secretariat General for Gender Equality implemented a national awareness campaign targeting commercial sex procurers, trafficking victims, and citizens. The campaign encourages the public to report incidents of trafficking. The government's anti-trafficking inter-ministerial committee met regularly and, in November 2005, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

established a working group between origin, transit, and destination country diplomats, NGOs, and working level government officials.

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